

## The Monadnock Building: Present and Simple

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The Monadnock Block was at Dearborn and Jackson Streets in Chicago, Illinois, a few blocks outside the business district and area of tall buildings. Purchased by Peter and Shepherd Brooks in 1881 and completed in 1892, the owners gave the commission to Daniel Burnham and John Root. Burnham & Root already had a positive reputation; Root as a thoughtful designer and Burnham an exacting businessman. The lot for the eventual north half of the Monadnock Building was 68 by 200 feet. Hoffmann argues in his 1967 article “John Root’s Monadnock Building” that the narrow lot necessitated a tall building for financial gain.<sup>1</sup> The eventual building was 202 feet tall. Critics both contemporary to the building and since have lauded the building’s pure expression of mass with its unadulterated brown walls interrupted only by vertical bay windows, gently protruding across the building. The building’s most striking feature is the thickening at the base with windows that are set far inside these walls. The base is further implied with an inward sweep to start the shaft of the building. A sweep at the top of the building implies its cap. While some theorists argue for a deeper meaning in the building, including allusions to Egyptian themes, others assert the tall building only exists to exert its tallness over Chicago.

The Monadnock Building’s most striking feature is its lack of ornament, which was a request from Brooks, who wrote: “My notion is to have no projecting surfaces or indentations, but to have everything flush, or flat and smooth, with the walls...”<sup>2</sup> The 202 foot high façade is a continuous brown brick, except granite ashlar at the entrances at the ground, as seen in figure 1. The only break from the façade is the protruding bays from

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Hoffmann, “John Root’s Monadnock Building,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (University of California Press) 26, no. 4 (December 1967): 270.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid: 270.

floors three to fifteen, which are chamfered at the base. The brown brick was not Root's first choice. Lauren Weingarden explains that Root was a leading theorist of color, and believed that color would become an independent means of expression in "The Colors of Nature: Louis Sullivan's Architectural Polychromy and Nineteenth-Century Color Theory."<sup>3</sup> Root saw color as an emotional essence of art, and Weingarden postulates that not having color in any of his tall buildings was a great disappointment in his career. He originally proposed the Monadnock as black at the base, and a shaft that faded from brown at the bottom to yellow at the top. Brooks contested, however, stating that it would "look as if the rain had begun at the top and washed the soot down."<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, the choice to not use polychromy proved positive, especially to Montgomery Schuyler, who stated in *American Architecture and other writings* that the monochrome unified the building into a mass, making it impressive, rather than expressive through color.<sup>5</sup>

Schuyler highly lauded the Monadnock in *American Architecture and other writings*, giving it one of the only positive reviews of contemporary skyscrapers. The Monadnock's unique masonry-bearing walls start at six feet thick at the base and thin to a slim foot and a half at the top, as seen in figure 2. The building uses cage construction with internal cast iron columns and steel beams. Although contemporary buildings were using steel frame construction, Shepherd Brooks did not trust the material, and opted for

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<sup>3</sup> Lauren S. Weingarden, "The Colors of Nature: Louis Sullivan's Architectural Polychromy and Nineteenth-Century Color Theory," *Winterthur Portfolio* (The University of Chicago Press) 20, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 247.

<sup>4</sup> Donald Hoffman, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). Donald Hoffman, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 164.

<sup>5</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961): 410.

something he knew would have lasting strength.<sup>6</sup> Aside from Brook's bias, the load-bearing walls were advantageous over steel because they gave the appearance of solidity. The building does not have a formal base, only a gentle swelling at the bottom with the thickening of the walls carrying load. The swelling may improve the appearance of stability rather than give the building more necessary stability. The base, or the first floor, has more height than the rest of the floors on the building, again anchoring the building. Schuyler argues that the stretched base makes its more proportionate to the building,<sup>7</sup> which could be a reference to the classical proportions to which the eye was accustomed. In "The Skyscraper: Logical and Historical Considerations," Carson Webster states that the impression of the height of a building comes from street level, not from a distance.<sup>8</sup> At street level at the Monadnock, the thick base portrays pure mass. As one looks up, the first element they see is still the base, and the monochrome façade seems like an extension of this mass, allowing the building to be perceived as absolute height, as seen in figure 3. Once the first floor ends, there is a dramatic sweep inwards; the batter is fifteen inches inward in a ten-foot rise. Hoffman states the sweep allows the base to be read as stability.<sup>9</sup> Schuyler agrees, stating that it expresses the stability of what is above.<sup>10</sup> Hoffman argues a further reflection of stability is the chamfering of the edges starting at the third floor and continuing to the top breaks the strict rigidity of the box of the building. The quarter-ellipse chamfer deepens with the height of the building,

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<sup>6</sup> Donald Hoffmann, "John Root's Monadnock Building," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (University of California Press) 26, no. 4 (December 1967): 272.

<sup>7</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961): 7.

<sup>8</sup> J. Carson Webster, "The Skyscraper: Logical and Historical Considerations," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (University of California Press) 18, no. 4 (December 1959): 127.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Hoffmann, "John Root's Monadnock Building," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (University of California Press) 26, no. 4 (December 1967): 275.

<sup>10</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961): 412.

culminating at three feet wide. The chamfering allows the building to optically thicken as it reaches the ground, although the difference is very slight. The thickening, like the thickening of the walls to the base, grounds the building, again allowing stability.

Schuyler argues the pure mass of the Monadnock against the steel frame of Burnham & Root's Reliance Building in Chicago from 1895 makes the latter seem unfinished.<sup>11</sup> To Schuyler, the Reliance building does not reflect a building, only the skeleton of one. It presents the problem of what to do with the skeleton, which no architect has answered to Schuyler's satisfaction. Burnham & Root cover the steel skeleton with terra cotta, which appears only as a skin draped over a skeleton. The expression of structure is not apparent, and the wall is lost. In the Monadnock, the incessant presence of the exterior walls, especially the thickening of the base, makes it a stronger structure to Schuyler. Joanna Merwood agrees with Schuyler's position in "The Mechanization of Cladding."<sup>12</sup> The lightweight cladding could not be seen as masonry, and thus looked awkward on the building. She also states Gideon's argument, which says that because the skin of the Reliance Building was not meaningful, it was "invisible to architecture."<sup>13</sup> The Monadnock's skin, alternatively, was loaded with structural meaning, and thus could be read as architecture.

The lack of ornament on the façade made the monotonous brown more impressive. Root stated, "In America we are free of artistic traditions," allowing him to

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<sup>11</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961): 412.

<sup>12</sup> Joanna Merwood, "The Mechanization of Cladding: The Reliance Building and the Narratives of Modern Architecture," *Grey Room* (The MIT Press) 4 (Summer 2001): 59.

<sup>13</sup> Joanna Merwood, "The Mechanization of Cladding: The Reliance Building and the Narratives of Modern Architecture," *Grey Room* (The MIT Press) 4 (Summer 2001): 59.

“find strength and fitness and a certain spontaneity and freshness.”<sup>14</sup> Hoffman cautions us against Harriet Monroe’s telling of Root’s story, which says that the client and Burnham undercut Root’s design ideas with the simple brick box.<sup>15</sup> When one understands that Root did not see a need for predetermined orders, Monroe’s account is discredited. Mumford agrees with Root’s position on ornamental design, stating in *The Brown Decades* in 1931 that attempts to simulate ornament of predetermined orders or ideals does not make the building read more like that ideal, but it strips the order of its original value.<sup>16</sup> By not allowing ornament on his building, Root was allowing his own language and value to read through the building. Contemporaries Schuyler and Barr Ferree argue that the success of the Monadnock lies in its ability to be interpreted as is, not as a collection of other items. Ferree praises Root for not using applied ornament to the building and for not using any classical proportions. He states the limitations of the site cannot allow for the “proportions of a cathedral,” for the language would not read appropriately.<sup>17</sup> He also sees the façade as a continuous object, not a collection of heterogeneous elements, which results when the ornament reads more strongly than the building itself. The cut façade needs to be patched back together, and the result is more of a Frankenstein of allusions than a building. He reprimands previous structures for not allowing the tall building to be tall. Both the cutting of the façade and the technique of stacking small buildings on top of each other too literally use previous techniques, while

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<sup>14</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades: The Study of the Arts of America 1865-1895* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955): 134.

<sup>15</sup> Donald Hoffmann, "John Root's Monadnock Building," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (University of California Press) 26, no. 4 (December 1967): 269.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades: The Study of the Arts of America 1865-1895* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955): 140.

<sup>17</sup> Barr Ferree, "The High Building and Its Art," *Scribner's Magazine* (Charles Scribner's Sons) 15, no. 5 (March 1894): 307.

the tall building should be using the same language in new ways.<sup>18</sup> Mumford lauds Root for solving the problem of the tall building without reinterpreting the problem.<sup>19</sup>

Not only does Root not break or stack the façade, Ferree says he uses verticality as the “leading motif” for the building. The vertical lines of the bays divide the façade. The protruding windows, described in different sources as oriels, bows, and bay windows, begin with a convex curve at the bottom and end with a an inversion of the same convex curve at the top of each strip. The long vertical strips of the bays form the “shaft” of the building, which can only be read because they begin above the first floor and end 19 ½ feet before the termination of the building. Although the bays stop, the rhythm of the windows is continuous along the façade. Schuyler states that the voids below the cornice after the conclusion of the bays resemble machicolation.<sup>20</sup> This could be a reference to an early sketch of Root, which showed a light vertical motif below the cornice, suggesting a more traditional beginning-middle-end building. The lack of bays at this point and the harsh vertical cuts of the windows as opposed to the smooth transition to the bays can read like this original motif.

The beginning, middle, and end of the Monadnock feed Cesar Pelli’s argument that the Monadnock building, like many skyscrapers at its time, invokes the Renaissance Palazzo in its form.<sup>21</sup> He states at that period, no formal devices had yet been used to resolve the problem of the tall building, so buildings instead adapted other building types, as seen in the arguments about ornament and proportion. The Monadnock could not take

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<sup>18</sup> Barr Ferree, "The High Building and Its Art," *Scribner's Magazine* (Charles Scribner's Sons) 15, no. 5 (March 1894): 309.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades: The Study of the Arts of America 1865-1895* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955): 134.

<sup>20</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961): 412.

<sup>21</sup> Cesar Pelli, "Skyscrapers," *Perspecta* (The MIT Press) 18 (1982): 135.

on the proportions of a cathedral, according to Hoffman, but Pelli argues that it can embody the form of a stretched palazzo. The key aspects of the palazzo model are the base, middle, and top in equilibrium with each other. The Monadnock's stretched bays can be read as the stretching of the middle part of the palazzo. The palazzo also has a heavy horizontal cap in the form of a cornice, which is also seen in the Monadnock. The cap of the Monadnock is only implied through a slight sweep of a cornice. The curve of the top cornice reflects the convex sweep above the first floor. Although not dramatic enough to be the heavy lid of the palazzo, the slight sweeping at the top and bottom can provide base and cap.

Pelli argues further that the capping of the top of palazzos implies a relationship to the horizon as opposed to the sky.<sup>22</sup> Although the building stands proudly on the site, it does not soar away like the skyscrapers of the mid to late twentieth century. He agrees with previous critics that the building has an upward vertical thrust, but it is still rooted to the ground. The close relationship with the ground is also seen in the entrances, which are the only element made of granite ashlar instead of brown brick. Hoffman argues that the granite entrances imply substance and stability.<sup>23</sup> Using Pelli's argument regarding the palazzo, the change in materials could tie the building to the ground. The entrance is separate from the building, allowing it to be read separately, and not part of the non-human scale vertical thrust of the building. Although made of a separate material, the entrances are severe, as seen in figure 4. The entrance is framed with heavy bricks; there is no use of columns or entablature. Although the post and lintel could be a Greek order, there is no ornamentation or implication of any order. According Hoffman, the entrances

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<sup>22</sup> Cesar Pelli, "Skyscrapers," *Perspecta* (The MIT Press) 18 (1982): 136.

<sup>23</sup> Donald Hoffmann, "John Root's Monadnock Building," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (University of California Press) 26, no. 4 (December 1967): 276.



are uncharacteristically small, only nine feet wide at the main entrance on Jackson and seven feet wide at the other entrances. The entrances are implied as much larger, however, as the lintels span forty-four feet. Schuyler does not see the entrances implied as larger, but only as a rectangular hole in a wall.<sup>24</sup> To him, this makes the Monadnock read as a blank expanse. A more detailed entrance would break the wall, and the building would not be as strong. Merwood agrees the small entrances provide for a homogenous grid.<sup>25</sup> Although the entrances can be read as part of the grid, the change in material suggests a base and attachment to the street, letting the building be read as a palazzo with a base. The writing of the buildings name above the entrance also attaches the building to the street. The large letters are easily seen for the busy urbanite.

Hoffman, among others, argues that the Monadnock is an expression of Egyptian motifs. Upon receiving Brook's request for an unornamented façade, Root dove into the idea of "Egyptian life effects."<sup>26</sup> At the time of the Monadnock's conception, Hoffman argues that many buildings at the time were also using Egyptian motifs, most of which were decorated with bud-shaped Egyptian plant forms.<sup>27</sup> The preliminary façade study from 1885 shows clumsy engaged columns and entablature around the entrance, as seen in figure 5. Hoffman says the most pronounced use of Egyptian motif is the terra-cotta representations of the lotus, the ancient emblem of Upper Egypt, at the tenth story.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961): 410.

<sup>25</sup> Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, *Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009): 59.

<sup>26</sup> Donald Hoffman, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 157.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid: 158.

<sup>28</sup> Donald Hoffman, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 159.

Above the twelfth story, Hoffman interpreted the vertical lines as papyrus stems, the symbol of Lower Egypt. To Hoffman, the early conception of Egyptian motifs in the façade study lends to the idea that Root used Egyptian ideas throughout his course of design. His fight for the building's polychromy, which he ultimately lost, is also tied to the Egyptian illusions, as the culture was inclined to polychromy.

Although the building ended with no ornamentation or Egyptian motifs on the façade, Hoffman argues that the profile of the building is the Egyptian allusion, as seen in figures 6 and 7.<sup>29</sup> The Egyptians used the papyrus stem to derive the shape of their bell-shaped column. The bell-shaped curve is seen at the cornice at the top of the building and the cornice at the top of the projecting bays, while the inverse of it is explicitly rendered at the base of the projecting bays, according to Hoffman. The bell-shaped cornice at the summit of the bays was the most like the papyrus stem to Hoffman, for the vertical sweep up the bays produced an effect like the papyrus stem. The bays were repeating papyrus columns around the building; Hoffman argues it is almost a replica to the papyrus column at Saqqara.<sup>30</sup> Thomas Hines adapts Hoffman's argument in *Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner*, who states the Monadnock is a combination of pre-Greek Egyptian forms.<sup>31</sup>

Joanna Merwood-Salisbury is against Hoffman's interpretation, and states that the Monadnock has long been inarguably interpreted as built to reflect Egyptian motifs in *Chicago 1890*. She posits that the building was not alluding to any classical or pre-classical architecture, and tends towards the pre-critical interpretation of the Monadnock

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<sup>29</sup> Donald Hoffman, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 167.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974): 69.

as a “frank expression of its program and construction.”<sup>32</sup> She chastises those who see the Egyptian style as a convenient way to understand the building.<sup>33</sup> The fault of critical architecture, to her, is reading too deeply into the architecture. Instead of seeing a pure expression of business, Hoffman and others make themselves see an Egyptian papyrus to give what they see as more meaning to the building. Merwood-Salisbury’s interpretation is in accordance with Schuyler, who does not mention Egyptian styling.

Merwood-Salisbury argues that the Monadnock is a representation of Chicago and business, claiming that the Monadnock is a commercial building in its natural state.<sup>34</sup> The building does not have any ornament, and instead of following Mumford’s argument about the breaking of the façade, Merwood argues that the application of ornament detaches it from the natural surroundings.<sup>35</sup> She sees the Rookery, a building splattered with architecture, as having no attachment to Chicago, while Monadnock, as a solid mass, is an extension of the city. The Monadnock seems to naturally rise out of the ground. This argument for the Monadnock is reminiscent of the Egyptian pyramids, which also seem to gently rise from the ground. Although Hoffman did not mention the pyramids in his argument for Egyptian allusions, one can see the Monadnock as a pyramid of its time, sloping out of the ground in a yet undeveloped area. Merwood does not see the mass of the Monadnock as a pyramid, but as a neutral wall for the jaded urban

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32 Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, *Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009): 55.

33 Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, *Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009): 60.

34 Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, *Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009): 55.

35 Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, *Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009): 56.

dweller.<sup>36</sup> She argues Root saw the urbanite dulled by the demands of business, so the Monadnock is a bland building, providing a restful surface, a place of repose for the eyes in a demanding city. She also argues that the monochromatic brick provides further relaxation for the viewer, even though Root argued for polychromy.

Merwood argues the simplicity of the building also represents the organized and structured business world. The simple façade with 389 repeating windows does not lead to a hectic reading, thus the interior business must also be simple and organized. Merwood uses the beehive as a metaphor to describe the Monadnock.<sup>37</sup> The simple encasing of the building suggests a structured environment, although the program allowed for multiple companies to function. While the inside was constantly bustling with moving business, the idea of a stable business world was reflected on the outside. She also saw the interior function as too complex to represent on the outside. Rather than try to describe minute aspects of the business world, Merwood says Root chose to avoid a coherent representation and tend towards a simpler envelope.

Merwood's reading of the building is more in line with that of Schuyler and Mumford, neither of who read into the Egyptian allusions of Hoffman. Schuyler lauded the building for bearing perfect relation to the rest of the Chicago, as it had individual design.<sup>38</sup> The commercial status of Chicago deserved commercial architecture, which was defined by the Monadnock. Mumford argues that the early skyscrapers, including the Monadnock was meant to express business by using play with the fundamental units of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid: 69.

<sup>37</sup> Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, *Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009): 65.

<sup>38</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961): 410.

construction.<sup>39</sup> He draws upon Root, who stated the tall buildings should carry out the ideals of modern business life, simplicity, stability, breadth, and dignity. The building is meant to be a modern symbol of Chicago, not a symbol of ancient Egypt.

Carl Condit argues in *The Chicago School of Architecture* that the bay windows were placed to provide for the maximum admission of light into the Monadnock, as seen in figure 8.<sup>40</sup> Admission of light was a concern as the heavy masonry walls could take away light and space from the interior. Thomas Keohan agrees with Condit in his report on “Preserving Historic Office Building Corridors.” Hoffman, however, argues that the bay windows had nothing to do with light, but only to steal more rental space.<sup>41</sup> At the time, the Monadnock had the largest percentage of rental space at fifty-five percent, while the Rookery only provided forty-five percent rental space. Like striving for a tall building, the bay windows could have been driven for financial gain instead of an expression of verticality and power.

The interior of the Monadnock is less discussed than the external formal presence. The site of the Monadnock Block demanded a long, narrow site. The ultimate dimensions are 66 feet and 2 inches wide by 198 feet and 5 inches high, almost an exactly 3:1 ratio, as seen in figure 9. The height of the building, 202 feet and 8 inches, also fits into this ratio. The narrow building precluded an atrium; there was no public space at the entrance of the building. Oswald Grube points out in *100 Years of Architecture* that the narrow

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<sup>39</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades: The Study of the Arts of America 1865-1895* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955): 141.

<sup>40</sup> Carl W. Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area, 1875-1925* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 67.

<sup>41</sup> Donald Hoffmann, "John Root's Monadnock Building," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (University of California Press) 26, no. 4 (December 1967): 272.

rectangle provided natural illumination on all the office spaces, which by necessity were on the periphery of the building, as seen in figure 10.<sup>42</sup> The offices and corridor partitions were made of feather cut glass, allowing light to penetrate to the double-loaded corridor. Offices are only on three walls. As the south half of the property was already purchased and the second building was in the conception phase, the fourth row of offices could have been left out to make that wall a party wall, or a wall for easier attachment to the new half, as seen in figure 11.

The staircases were centrally located in the main corridors. They provided a continuous path through the building. The first floor staircase was made of cast aluminum, while the stairs above were bronze-plated cast iron, as seen in figure 12. The ornamental open staircases are the only semblance of a public realm outside a typical corridor in the Monadnock. Hoffman explains that the staircases were directly adopted from those in Burnham and Root's earlier building the Rookery.<sup>43</sup> The staircases have no attachment to the Monadnock and are incongruous with the formal language of the exterior or even the simple and exact plan.

The Preservation for Historic Architecture describes the corridor as having glazed walls, oak trim, and marble wainscoting which is typical of late 19<sup>th</sup> century tall buildings, as seen in figures 13 and 14.<sup>44</sup> The interior was decorated with fine materials, which is detailed in the patterned tile floor, bronze mail chute, and cast iron door hardware. Keohan argues that the high quality materials provide a timeless environment

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<sup>42</sup> Oswald W. Grube, Peter C. Pran and Franz Schulze, *100 Years of Architecture in Chicago: Continuity of Structure and Form* (Chicago, IL: Follett Publishing Compan, 1977): 21.

<sup>43</sup> Donald Hoffman, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 165.

<sup>44</sup> *The Preservation of Historic Architecture: The US Government's Official Guidelines for Preserving Historic Homes* (Gullford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2004): 186.

in the building, in spite of the smaller offices.<sup>45</sup> Root passed away before the completion of the interior, leading his less capable partner Daniel Burnham to design the interior. Hoffman argues Burnham “parroted” earlier office work, disregarding the formal language Root had been using for his design.<sup>46</sup> The interior is devoid of meaning, which is apparent when compared with the formally loaded exterior.

The Monadnock Building is a testament to stability and verticality. Although Root may have used Egyptian motifs to construct his final form, the final result was a building firmly rooted to the ground. It was, as Schuyler said, impressive, not expressive. The implicit meaning of the building was strength, although neither Burnham nor Root explicitly stated it on the building. The timeless building may have broken the rules of ornamentation, but it did not break the rules of masonry construction, which gives it the mass all critics have attributed to the success of the structure. The Monadnock is an ending point to masonry construction and ornamental expressivity, and it is the beginning of the skyscraper type and American use of expression in architecture.

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas G. Keohan, *Historic Interior Spaces, Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building Corridors*, Division of Cultural Resources, U.S. Department of Interior (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1989): 7.

<sup>46</sup> Donald Hoffman, *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 165.



Figure 1: North side of the Monadnock Building right after construction  
*Keegan, Chicago Architecture: 1885 to Today, 2008*





Figure 2 Thickening of the walls on the lower levels  
*Merwood-Salisbury, Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City, 2009*



Figure 3 View looking up from the street with signage  
*Hines, Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner, 1974*



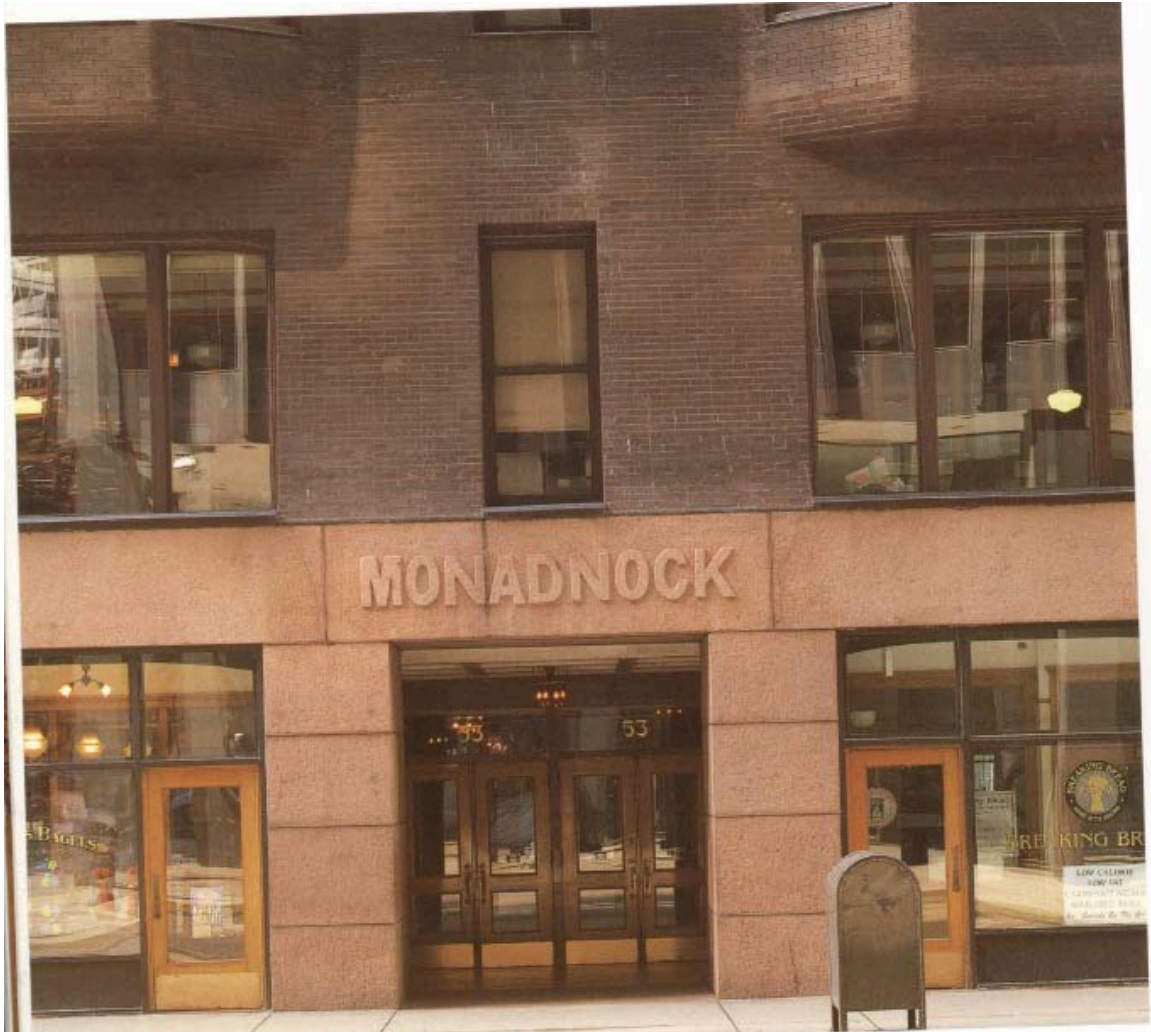


Figure 4 Entrance on the North Half

*Schaffer, Daniel H. Burnham: Visionary Architect and Planner, 2003*

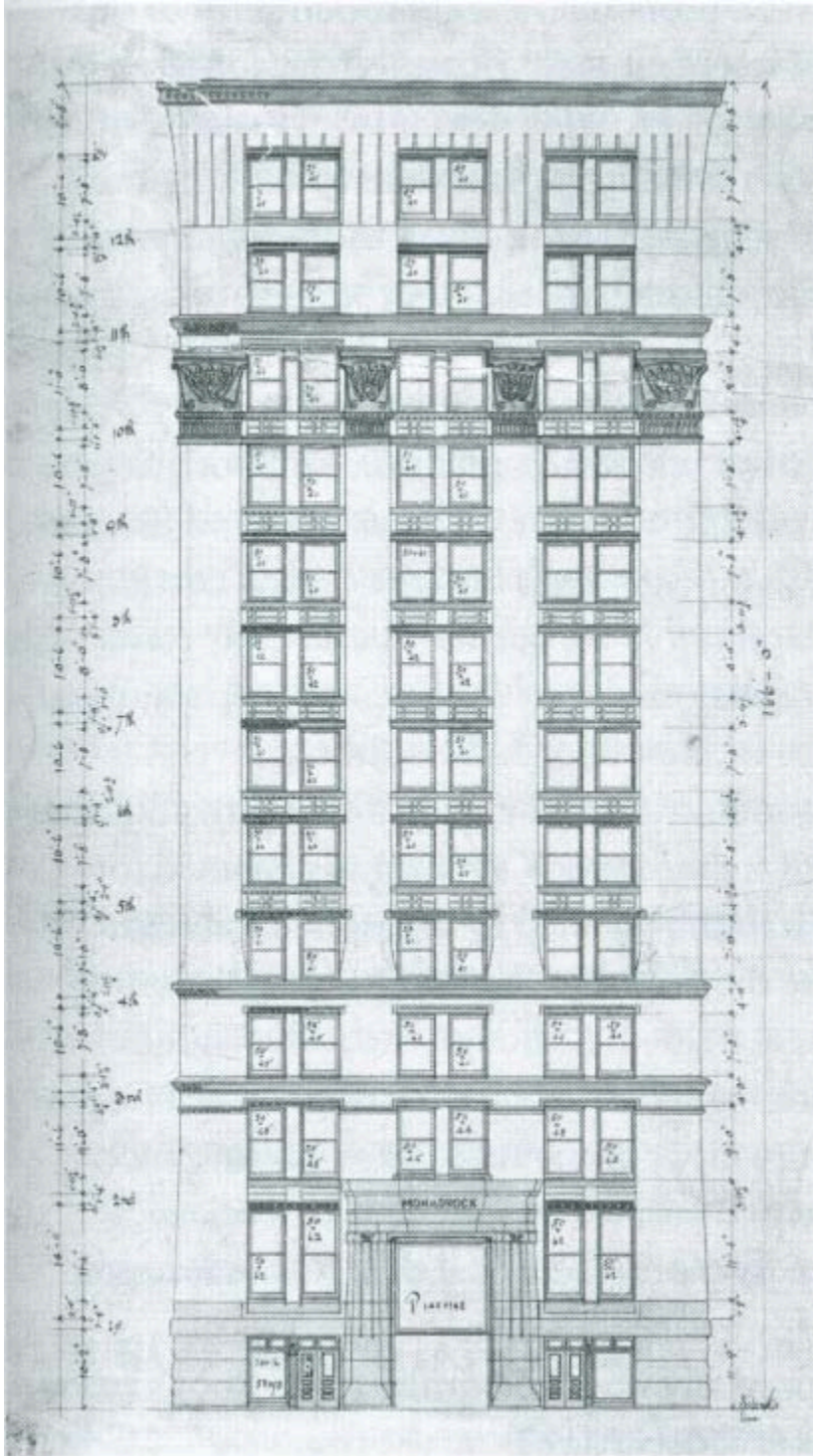


Figure 5 1885 elevation study (Root, 1885)  
*Merwood-Salisbury, Chicago 1890: The Skyscraper and the Modern City, 2009*



Figure 6 Elevation

*Hoffman, "John Root's Monadnock Building," 1967*

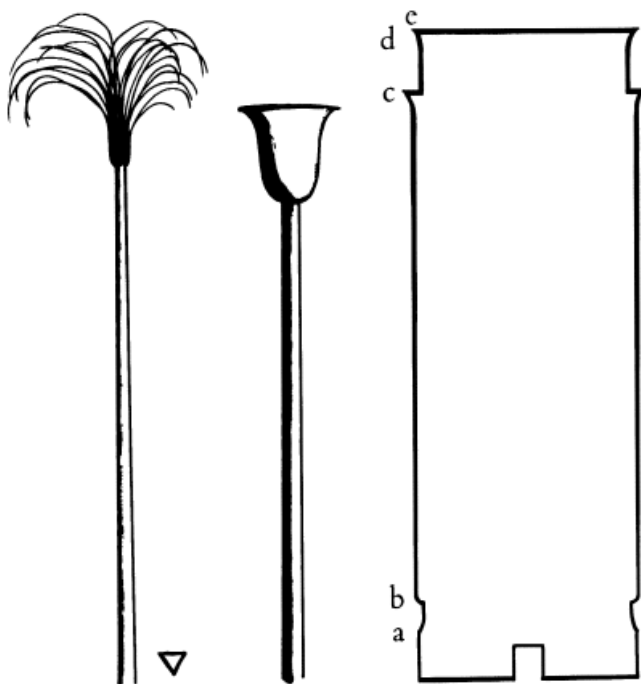


Figure 7 Papyrus forms: (i) the plant, (ii) bell-shaped papyrus, column at Saqqara, (iii) Monadnock Building Jackson Street profile

*Hoffman, "John Root's Monadnock Building," 1967*



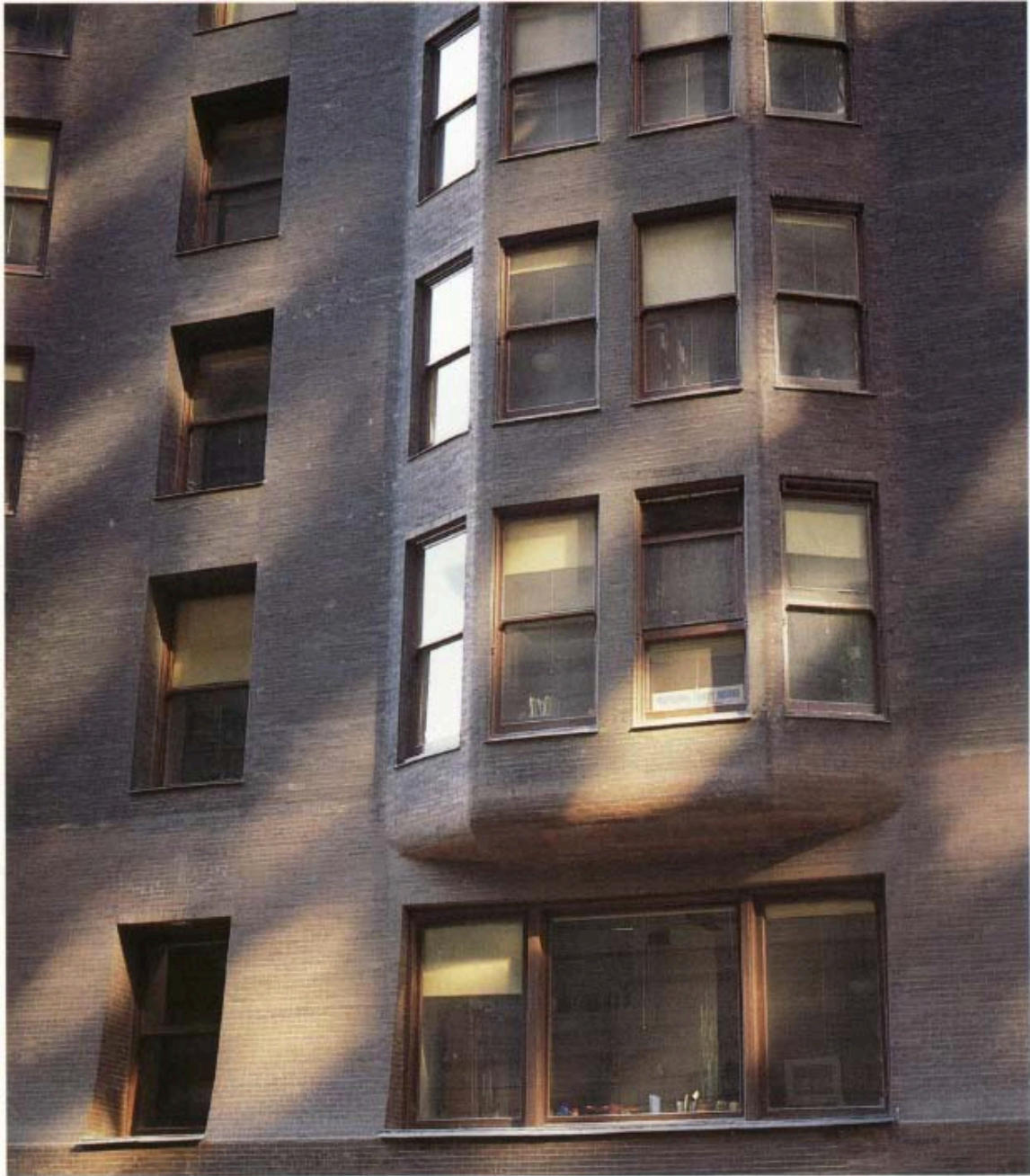


Figure 8 Bay windows

*Schaffer, Daniel H. Burnham: Visionary Architect and Planner, 2003*

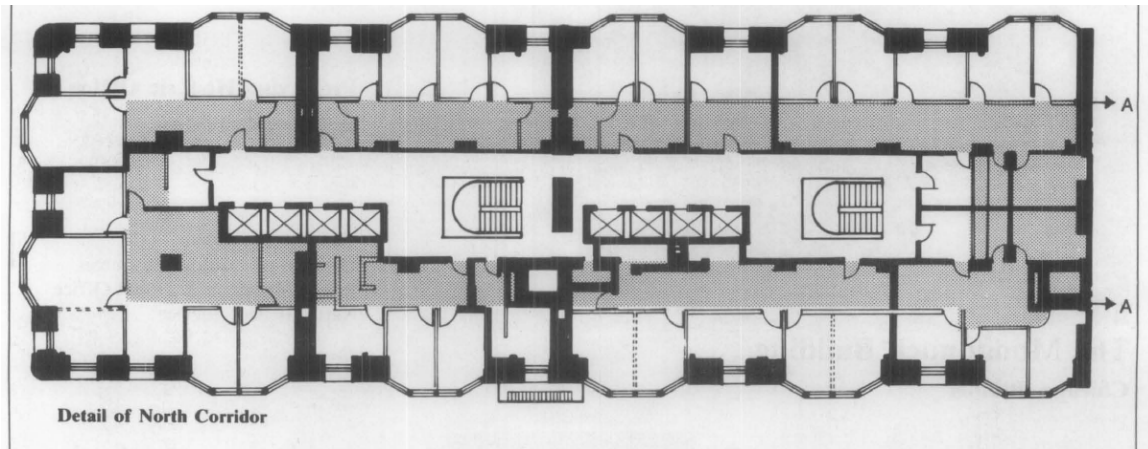


Figure 9 North side typical floor plan

*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building Corridors, 1989*

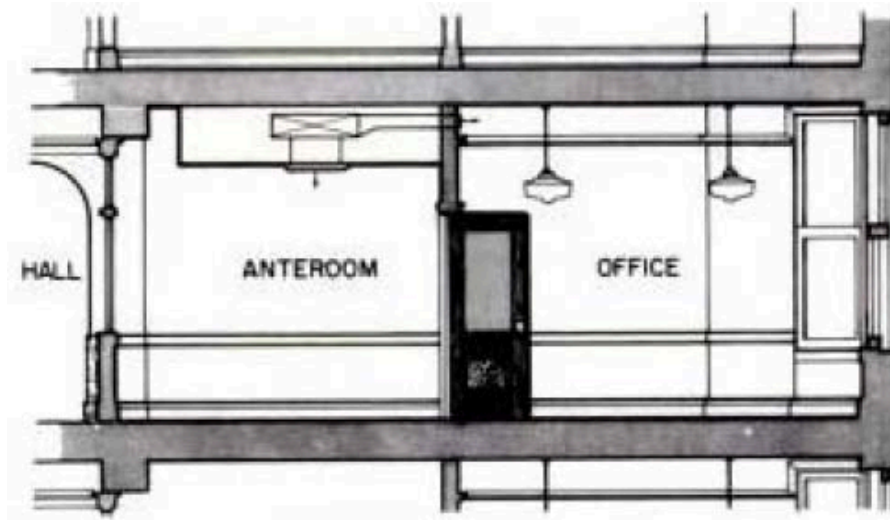


Figure 10 Typical floor section

*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building Corridors, 1989*

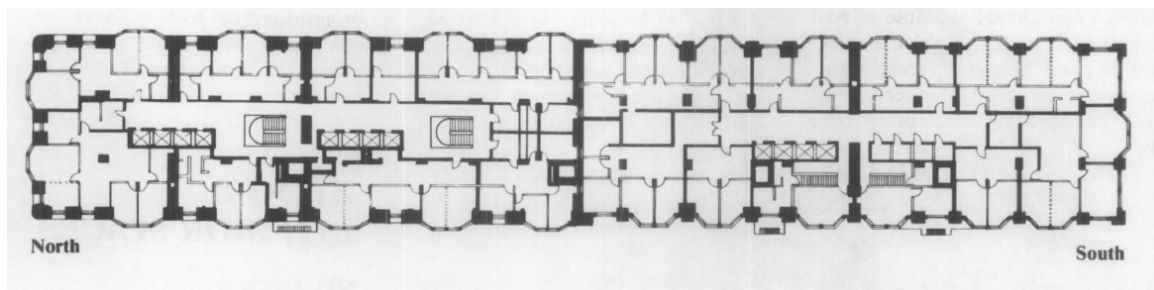


Figure 11 North and south sides typical floor plan

*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building Corridors, 1989*



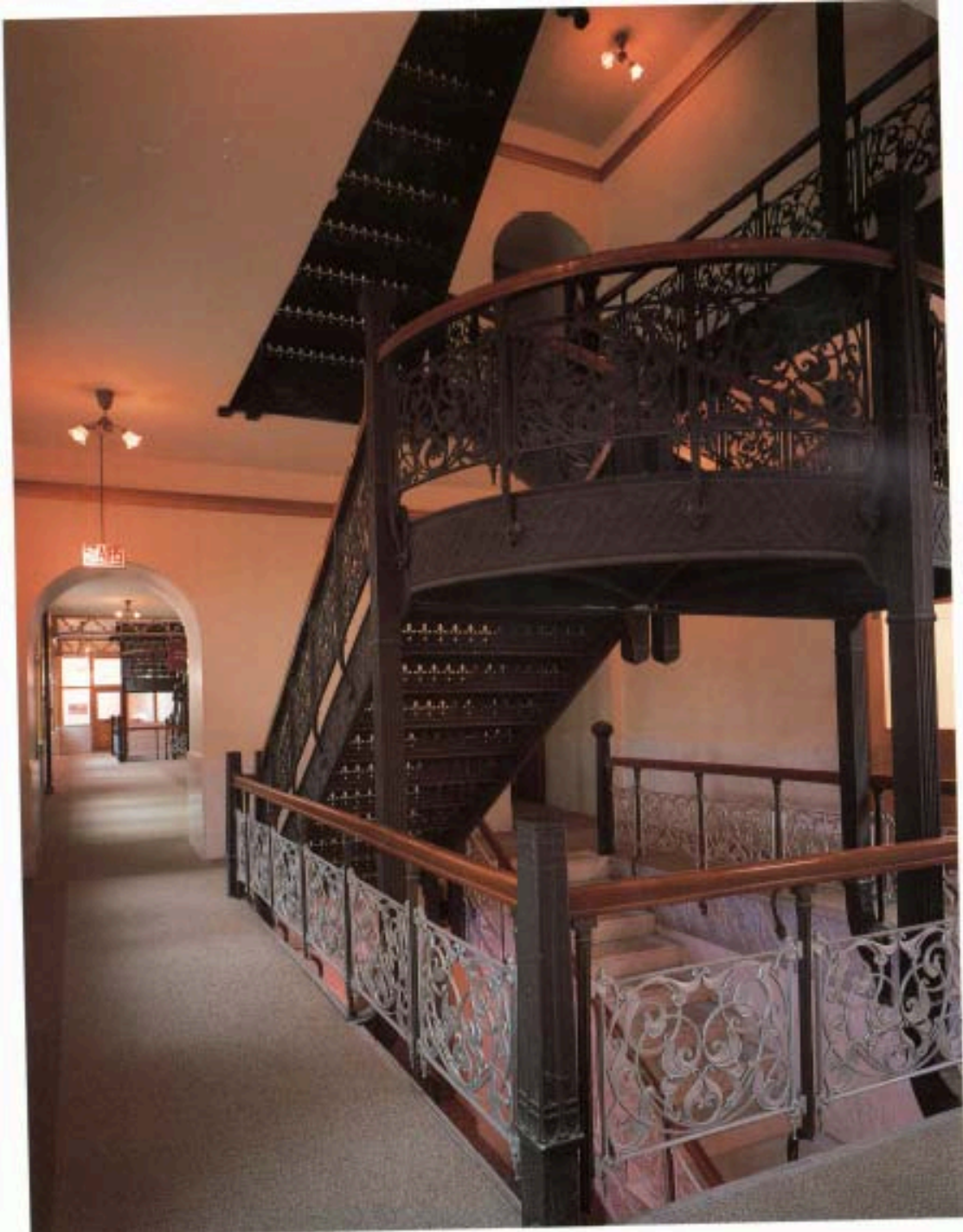


Figure 12 Ornamental staircases  
*Schaffer, Daniel H. Burnham: Visionary Architect and Planner, 2003*





Figure 13 Typical floor image  
*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building  
Corridors, 1989*

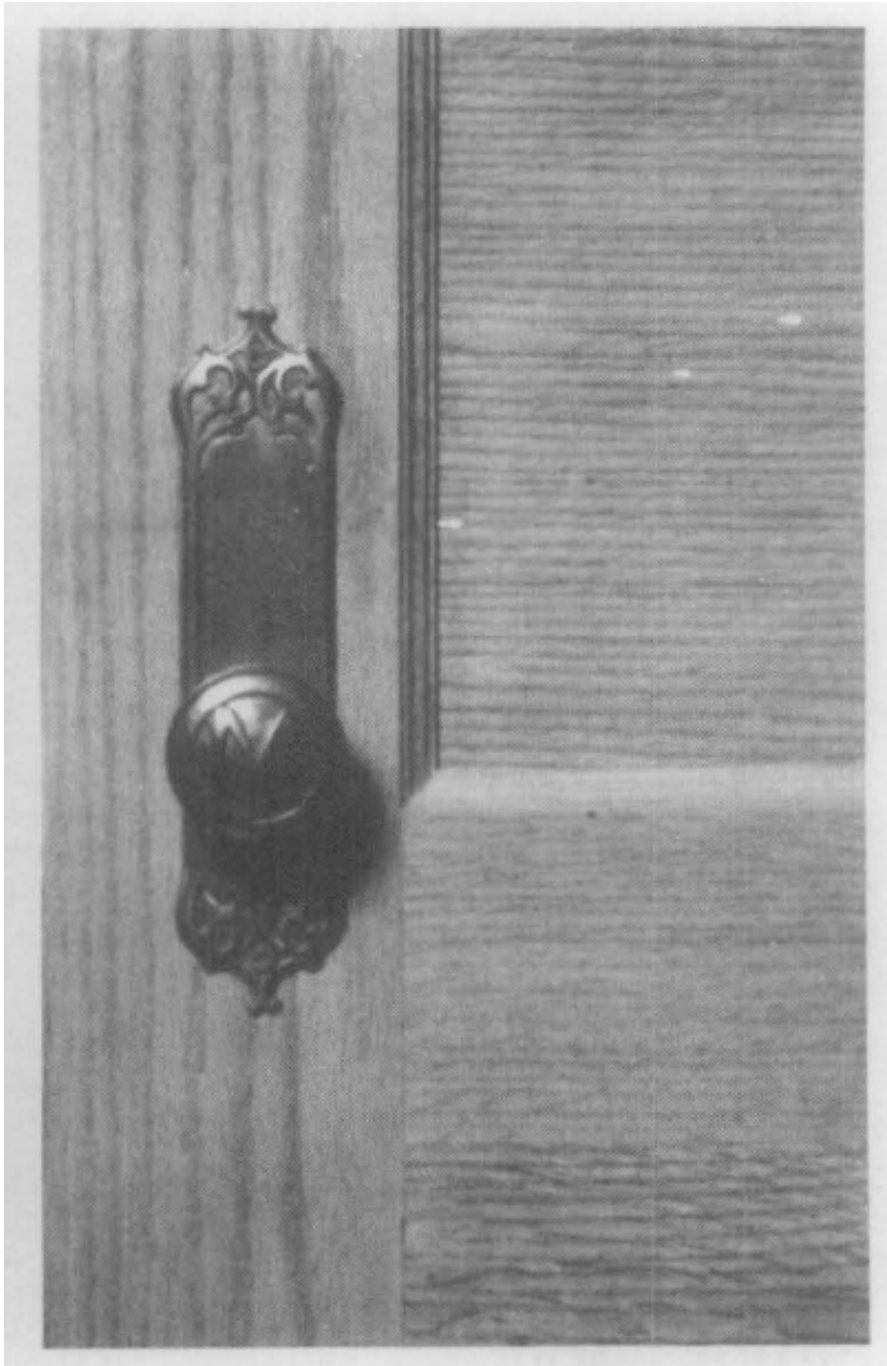


Figure 14 Detail of cast-iron doorknob

*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building  
Corridors, 1989*



Figure 15 Perspective view of the north façade, completed by Burnham and Root in 1891  
*Merwood-Salisbury, 1890 Chicago: The Skyscraper and the Modern City, 2009*





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Figure 16 Street view, showing lower floor's attachment to the street  
*Merwood-Salisbury, 1890 Chicago: The Skyscraper and the Modern City, 2009*



Figure 17 Windows inset in thick walls  
*O'Gorman, Architecture in Detail, 2003*



Figure 18 Ornamental staircase inside the building  
*O'Gorman, Architecture in Detail, 2003*





Figure 19 Ornamental staircase and balastrade  
*Schaffer, Daniel H. Burnham: Visionary Architect and Planner, 2003*



72. MONADNOCK BUILDING, SOUTH ADDITION, 1893  
HOLABIRD AND ROCHE

Figure 20 The south addition is more ornamental than the north side  
*Condit, The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area, 1875-1925, 1964*



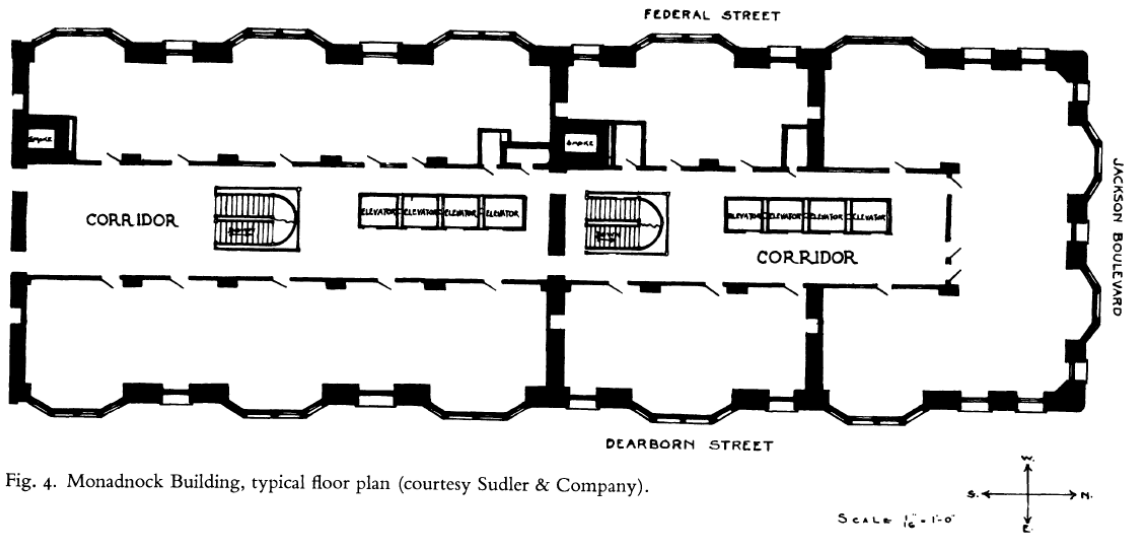


Fig. 4. Monadnock Building, typical floor plan (courtesy Sudler & Company).

Figure 21 Typical floor plan on the north side  
*Hoffmann, "John Root's Monadnock Building," 1967*



Figure 22 Bottom floors attach to street culture  
*Hoffmann, "John Root's Monadnock Building," 1967*



Figure 23 Ornamental iron staircase  
Ornamental Iron and Bronze, 1901



Figure 24 Ornamental iron staircase  
Ornamental Iron and Bronze, 1901



Figure 25 Building corridor with ornamental marble work  
The Preservation of Historic Architecture: The US Government's Official  
Guidelines for Preserving Historic Homes, 2004



Figure 26 The solid building swoops towards the sky  
“In Perspective: The Appearance of Solidity,” 2000



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Figure 27 Perspective view of the Monadnock  
Ferre, "The High Building and Its Art," 1894



Figure 28 Corridor  
*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building Corridors, 1989*

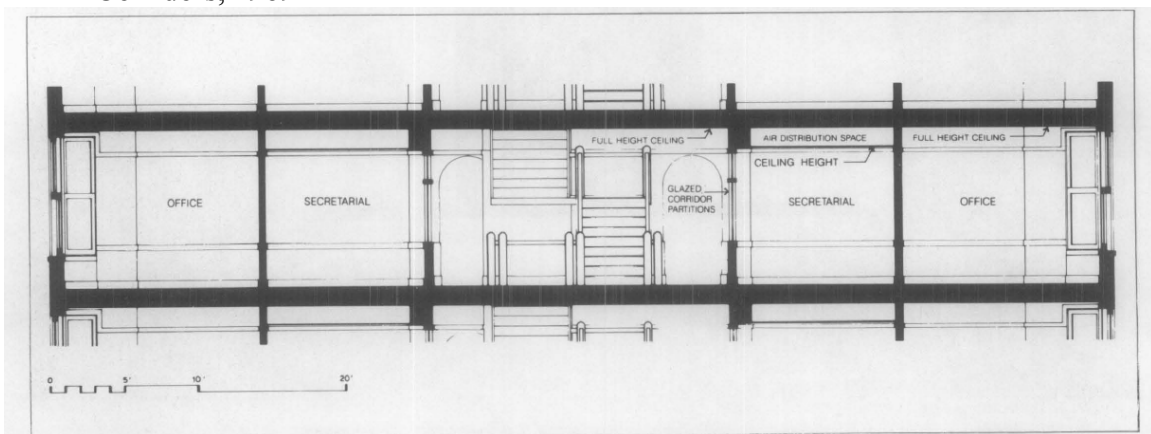


Figure 29 Section through single floor  
*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building Corridors, 1989*



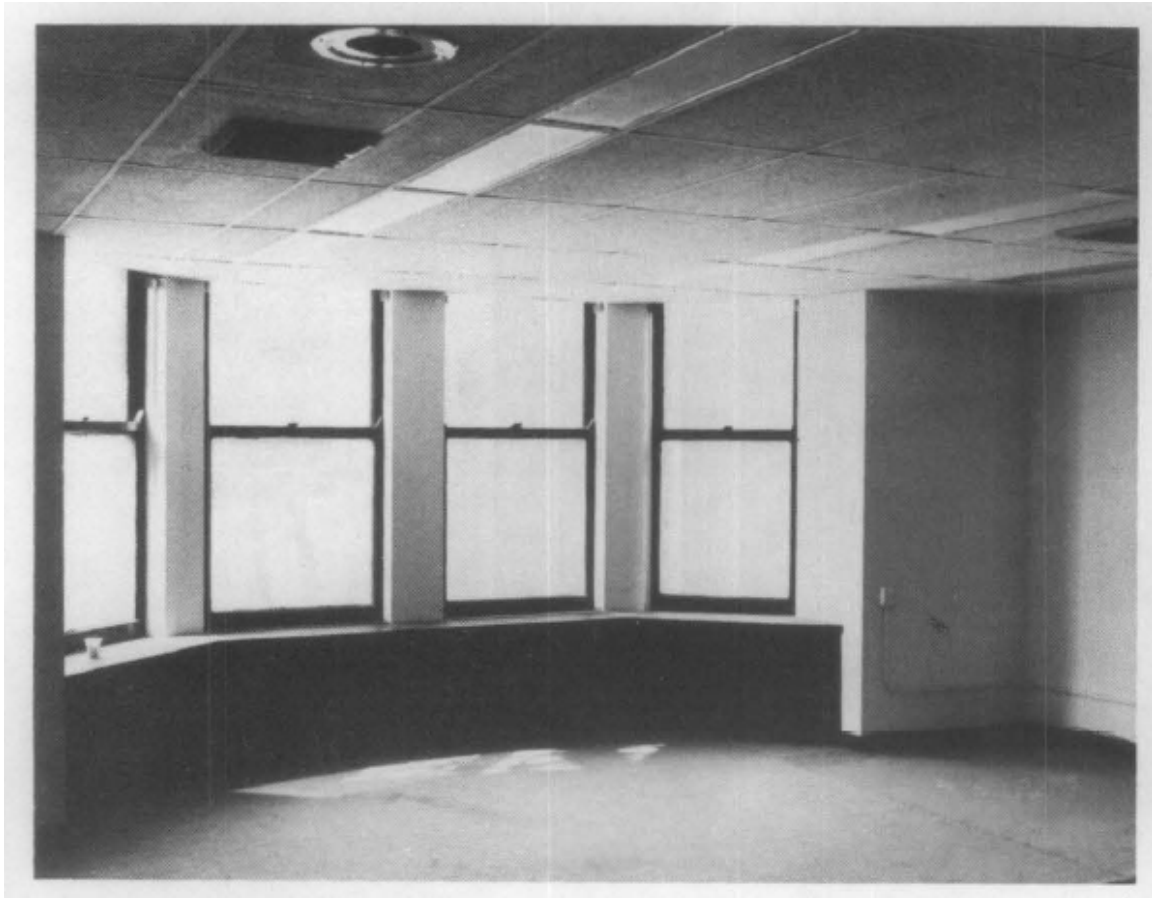


Figure 30 View of empty office with bay window  
*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building  
Corridors, 1989*



Figure 31 View of furnished office with bay window  
*Keohan, Historic Interior Spaces: Number 2: Preserving Historic Office Building  
Corridors, 1989*



Figure 32 View of entrance on South Half  
Photo by author, 2012



Figure 33 Detail of entrance on southern half  
Photo by author, 2012



Figure 34 Detail on south half  
Photo by author, 2012





Figure 35 Detail of entrance, south half  
Photo by author, 2012



Figure 36 Detail on south half  
Photo by author, 2012



Figure 37 Detail on south half  
Photo by author, 2012



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